I'M HASEGAWA KODAKA. IN MAY, MY DAD TRANS-FERRED OVERSEAS.
IT WAS AN AWKWARD TIME OF YEAR TO CHANGE SCHOOLS, BUT HERE I AM...
BACK IN MY HOMETOWN, TOOYA, AFTER BEING GONE FOR TEN YEARS.
AND THERE'S SOMETHING WEIGHING ON MY MIND.
HA HA! COME ON, DON'T TEASE ME!
TWITCH
WHO'S TALKING IN THERE?
SEE, I DON'T HAVE MANY FRIENDS.
?
IT'S NOT LIKE THAT!
HA HA! NO, I JUST SAID THAT'S NOT WHAT HAPPENED!
I THINK THAT'S...

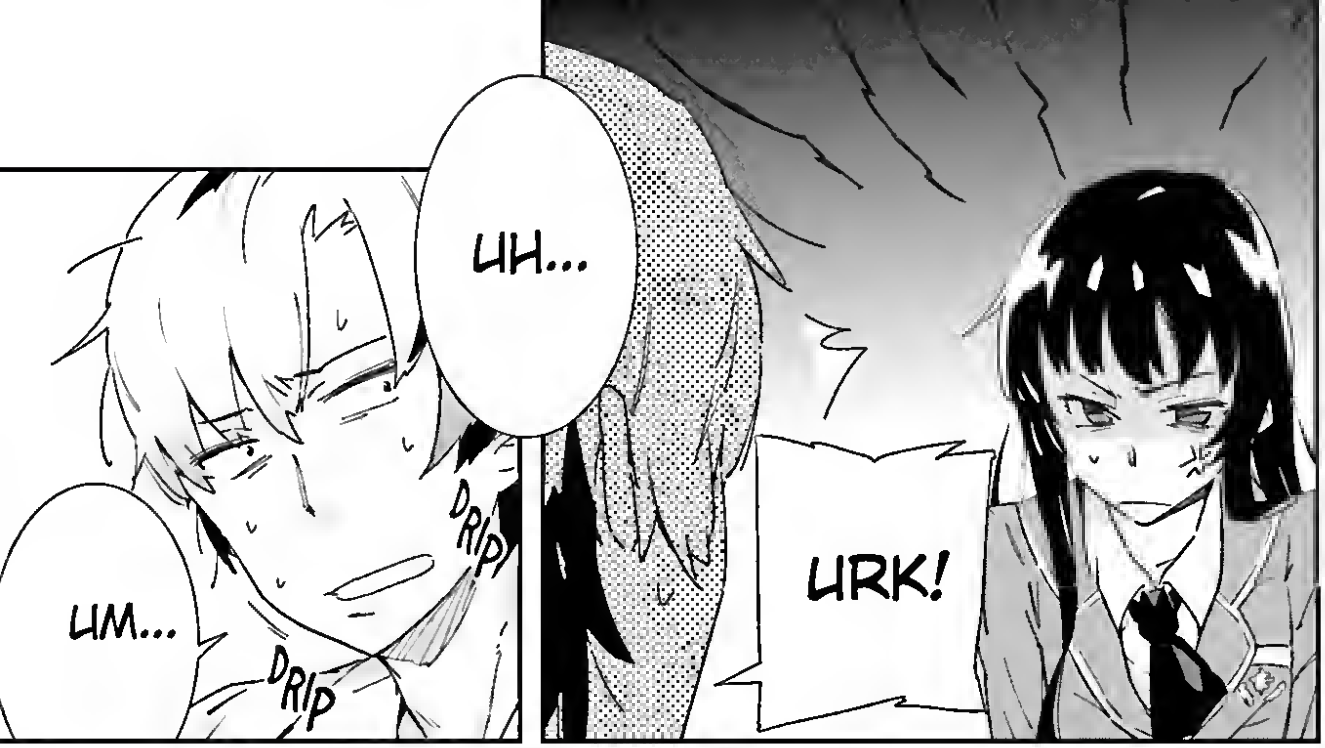
A GIRL WHO'S IN CLASS 2-5 WITH ME.
I MEAN, THAT TEACHER WAS SO...
MIKAZUKI YOZORA...?
I'VE NEVER SEEN HER...
TALKING SO HAPPILY WITH ANYONE BEFORE.

Club Activity Log 1:
Hasegawa Kodaka

ACTUALLY, I'VE NEVER SEEN HER WITH ANYBODY.
SHE ALWAYS HAS AN UNPLEASANT LOOK ON HER FACE.
SHE PRACTICALLY RADIATES GRUMPINESS.
MIKAZUKI USUALLY LOOKS NOTHING LIKE THAT.
WHAT...?! NO WAY!
HA! IF ONLY!
HUH?
ER...
WHEN SHE LAUGHS, SHE'S LIKE A DIFFERENT PERSON.

*A pun on "Tomo," meaning "friend."

UH...
UH OH!
WELL, THIS IS AWKWARD.
I'LL ACT NATURAL AND GRAB THE THING I FORGOT.

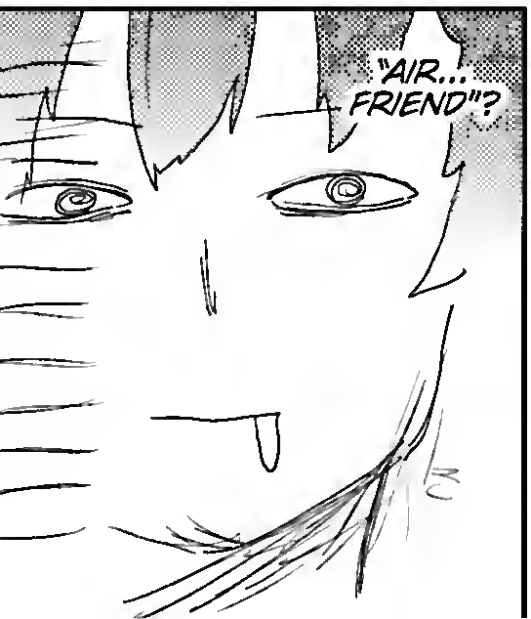

UH...
UM...
DRIP
DRIP
URK!

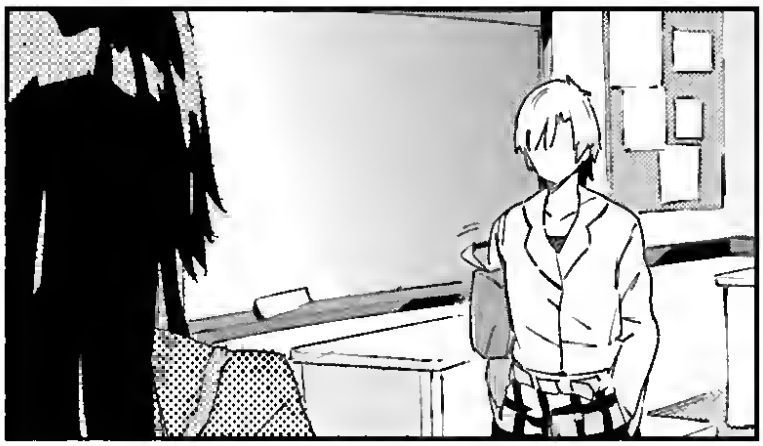
S-SO...
CAN YOU SEE GHOSTS OR SOME-THING?

WHA...?

ACK!
?!
I HEARD YOU TALKING TO SOMEONE, THAT'S ALL.
OH, PLEASE! YOU BELIEVE IN GHOSTS?
ARE YOU AN IDIOT?
SO HE DID HEAR ME...
MUMBLE
I WAS TALKING TO MY FRIEND, OKAY?

MY AIR FRIEND!

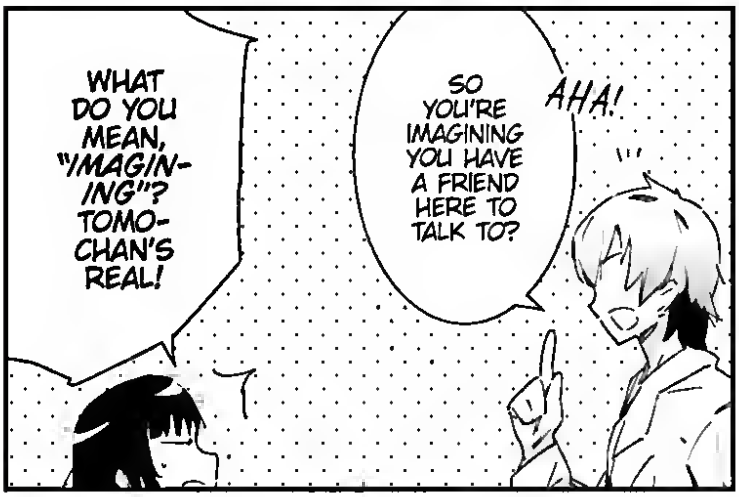

"AIR... FRIEND"?



EVERYONE TREATS ME LIKE SOME KIND OF DELINQUENT OR PROBLEM CHILD.
IN CASE THE NAME DIDN'T GIVE IT AWAY, SAINT CHRONICA ACADEMY IS A CATHOLIC SCHOOL.
GLARE
AND THIS LOOK IN MY EYES.
JUST BECAUSE I HAVE HAIR LIKE THIS...
EVER SINCE I WAS A KID, PEOPLE HAVE HAD THE WRONG IDEA ABOUT ME.
IT MAKES PEOPLE THINK I'M SOME WANNABE TOUGH GUY WHO CAN'T EVEN BLEACH HIS HAIR RIGHT.
BUT AS YOU CAN SEE, MY DAD'S HALF OF THE MIX IS JAPANESE.
MY MOM WAS FROM ENGLAND, SO IT'S TOTALLY NORMAL FOR HER SON (ME!) TO BE BLOND.

AND HERE I THOUGHT I DIDN'T HAVE MANY FRIENDS.
AN "AIR FRIEND"...? SERIOUSLY?

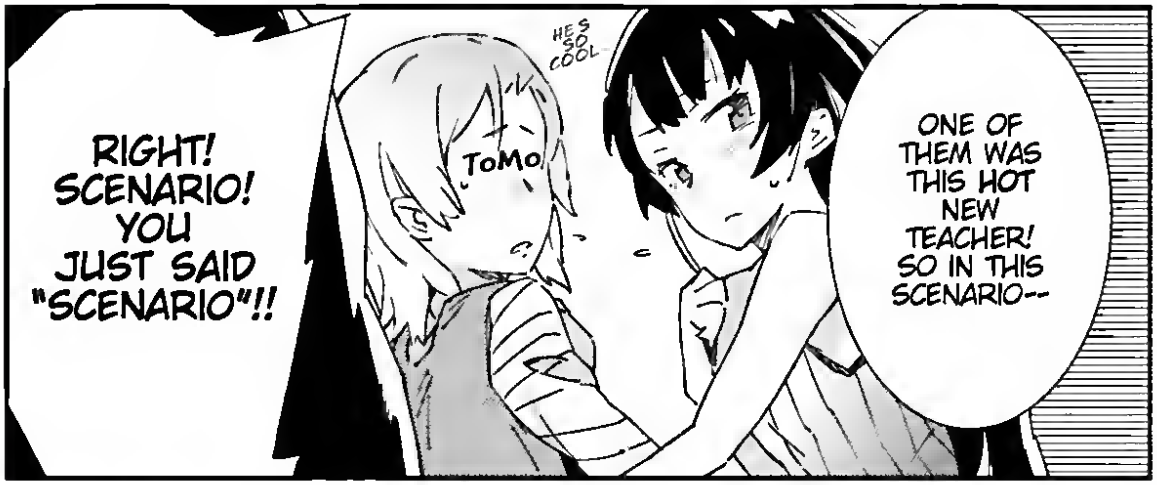
WHAT THE HECK IS AN AIR FRIEND?
YOU'VE HEARD OF AIR GUITAR, RIGHT? THIS IS THE FRIEND VERSION.
WHAT IT SOUNDS LIKE!

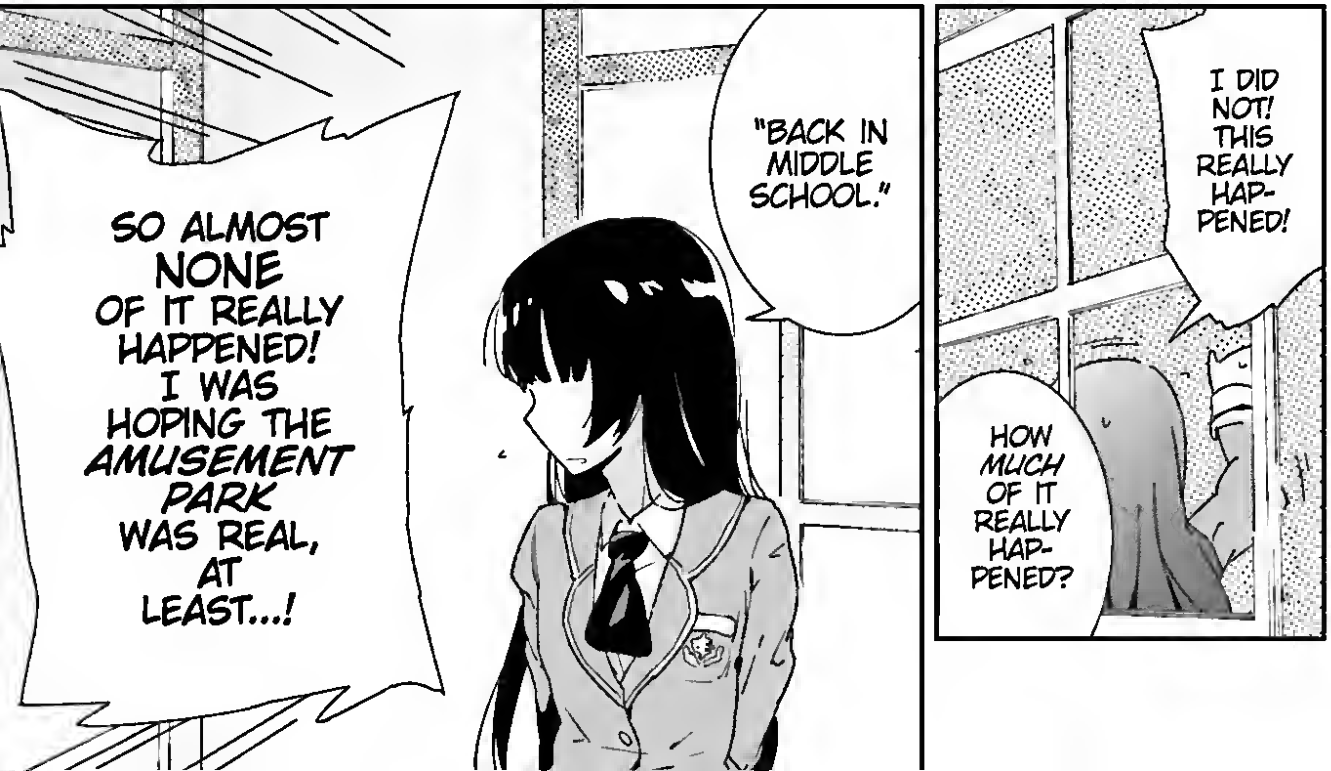

AHA!
SO YOU'RE IMAGINING YOU HAVE A FRIEND HERE TO TALK TO?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "IMAGINING"? TOMO-CHAN'S REAL!

UHH...
SO...

SEE? SHE'S RIGHT HERE!
IS THAT HER AIR FRIEND'S NAME...? OF COURSE I CAN'T SEE HER!

TOMO-CHAN AND I HAVE THE BEST CONVER-SATIONS.
I ALWAYS LOSE TRACK OF TIME.
WE WERE REMEMBERING A TRIP TO AN AMUSEMENT PARK BACK IN MIDDLE SCHOOL.
THIS BUNCH OF GUYS KEPT HITTING ON US.


ONE OF THEM WAS THIS HOT NEW TEACHER! SO IN THIS SCENARIO--
HE'S SO COOL
TOMO
RIGHT! SCENARIO! YOU JUST SAID "SCENARIO"!!


I DID NOT! THIS REALLY HAP-PENED!
HOW MUCH OF IT REALLY HAP-PENED?
"BACK IN MIDDLE SCHOOL."
SO ALMOST NONE OF IT REALLY HAPPENED! I WAS HOPING THE AMUSEMENT PARK WAS REAL, AT LEAST...!

NO, FORGET I SAID THAT.
TOMO-CHAN'S TOO CUTE! MEN WOULD ALWAYS HIT ON HER IF WE WENT FOR REAL.
WHAT FUN IS GOING TO AN AMUSEMENT PARK ALONE?
SO YOU ADMIT YOU WERE BY YOUR-SELF...
OBVIOUSLY WE HAVE TO STICK TO IMAGINARY AMUSEMENT PARKS.
AN AIR FRIEND... AN IMAGI-NARY AMUSE-MENT PARK...
THIS GIRL'S GOT SERIOUS ISSUES. I'VE GOTTA DO SOME-THING, QUICK.
WHAT'S THAT LOOK FOR?
WELL... IT'S JUST...
IF YOU WANT TO TALK TO FRIENDS, WHY NOT MAKE SOME IN REAL LIFE?
ER... REAL FRIENDS, I MEAN. NOT YOUR AIR FRIEND.

OH, PLEASE.
IF I COULD DO THAT, DO YOU THINK I'D HAVE THIS PROBLEM?
RIGHT. SHE'S GOT A POINT THERE.
HA HA HA...
HUH... I JUST NOTICED. YOU'RE THAT NEW KID WHO'S ALWAYS ALONE.
YOU JUST NOTICED NOW?
YOU'RE IN NO POSITION TO LECTURE ME ABOUT FRIENDS, NEW KID.
I'VE BEEN HERE FOR A MONTH, SO I'M NOT EXACTLY NEW ANYMORE.

WELL, YOU'RE IN NO POSITION TO LECTURE ME ABOUT FRIENDS, KODAKA.

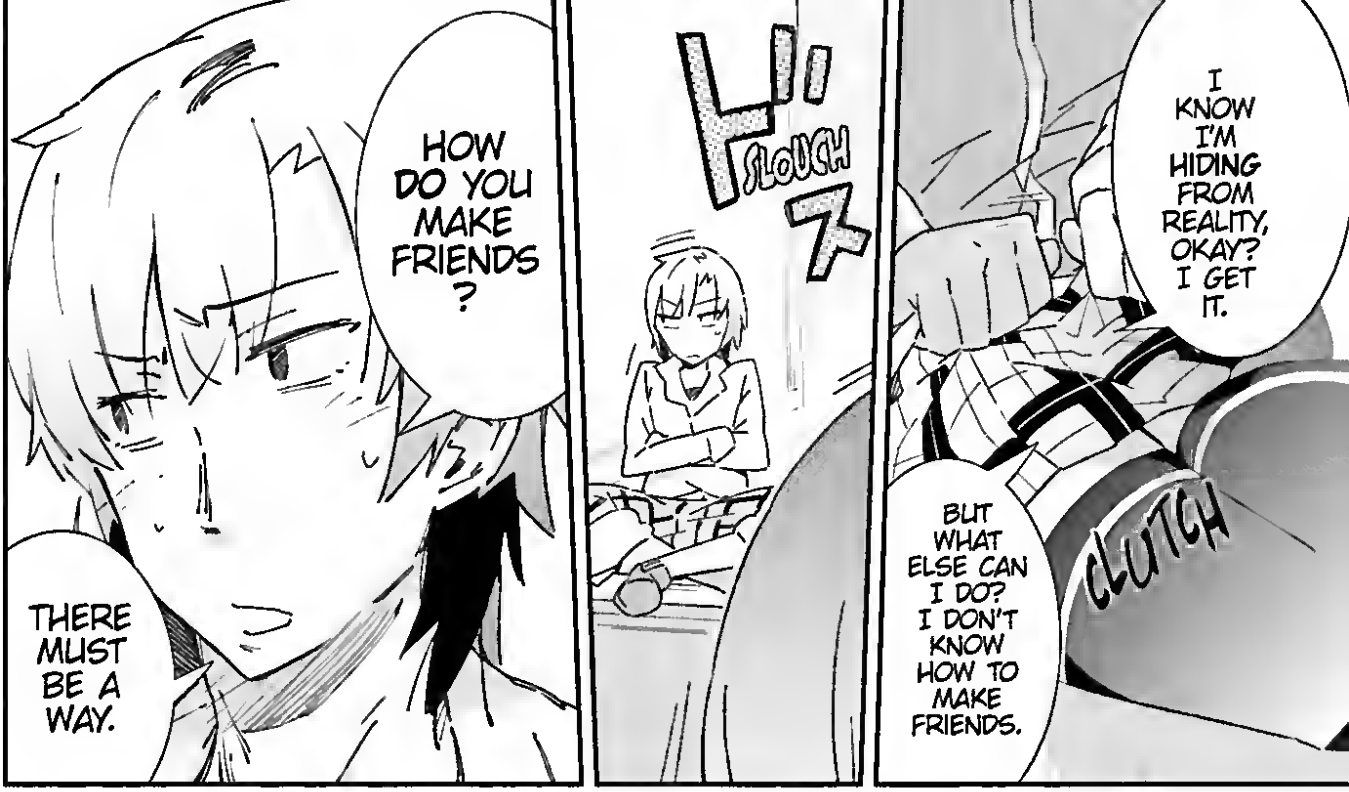
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
HASE-GAWA KODAKA.

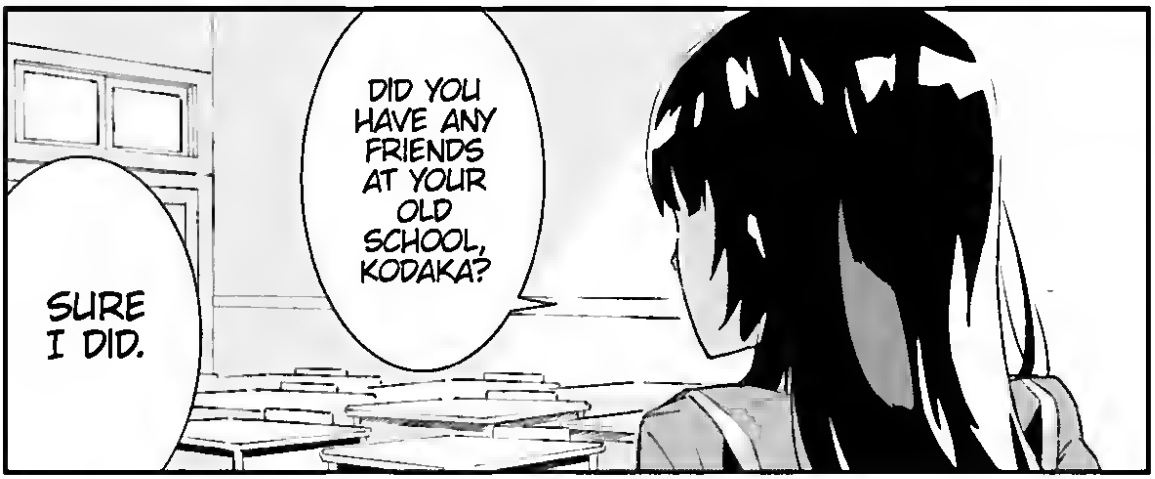
KODAKA, HUH...?

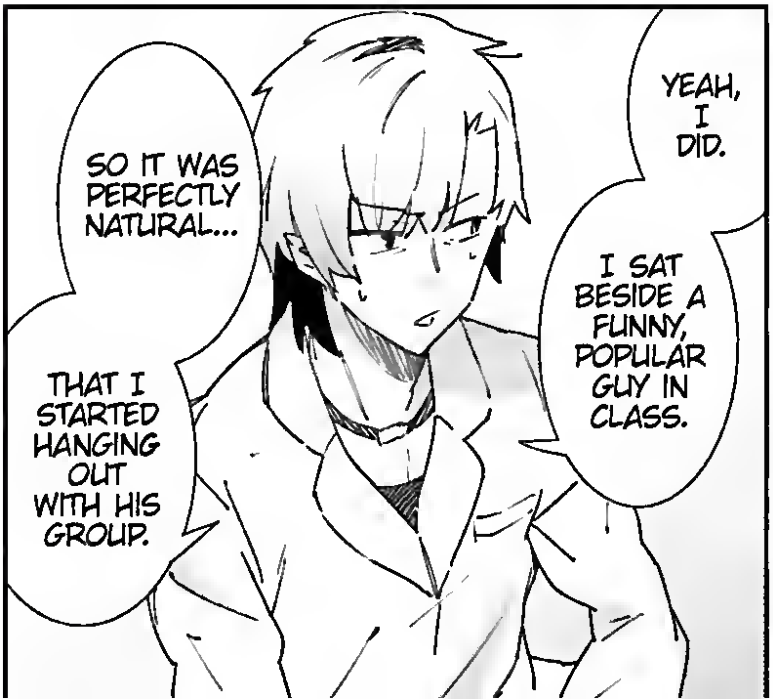
WHAT'S WITH YOU?
THRILLED TO BE CALLED BY HIS FIRST NAME
N-NOTHING.

JUST LIKE THAT, SHE THINKS WE'RE ON A FIRST-NAME BASIS...?
?

SNIDE
YOU'VE BEEN HERE A MONTH AND HAVE NO FRIENDS?
THAT'S PRETTY SAD, KODAKA.
SAYS THE GIRL WITH THE AIR FRIEND!
ANY-WAY...
YOU--! ARE YOU MAKING FUN OF TOMO-CHAN?
TOMO-CHAN IS CUTE AND SMART AND GREAT AT SPORTS!
SHE'S SO SWEET, AND SO MUCH FUN TO TALK TO.
AND BESIDES ...
SHE'LL NEVER, EVER BETRAY ME.


HOW DO YOU MAKE FRIENDS?
THERE MUST BE A WAY.
SLOUCH
I KNOW I'M HIDING FROM REALITY, OKAY? I GET IT.
BUT WHAT ELSE CAN I DO? I DON'T KNOW HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS.
CLUTCH

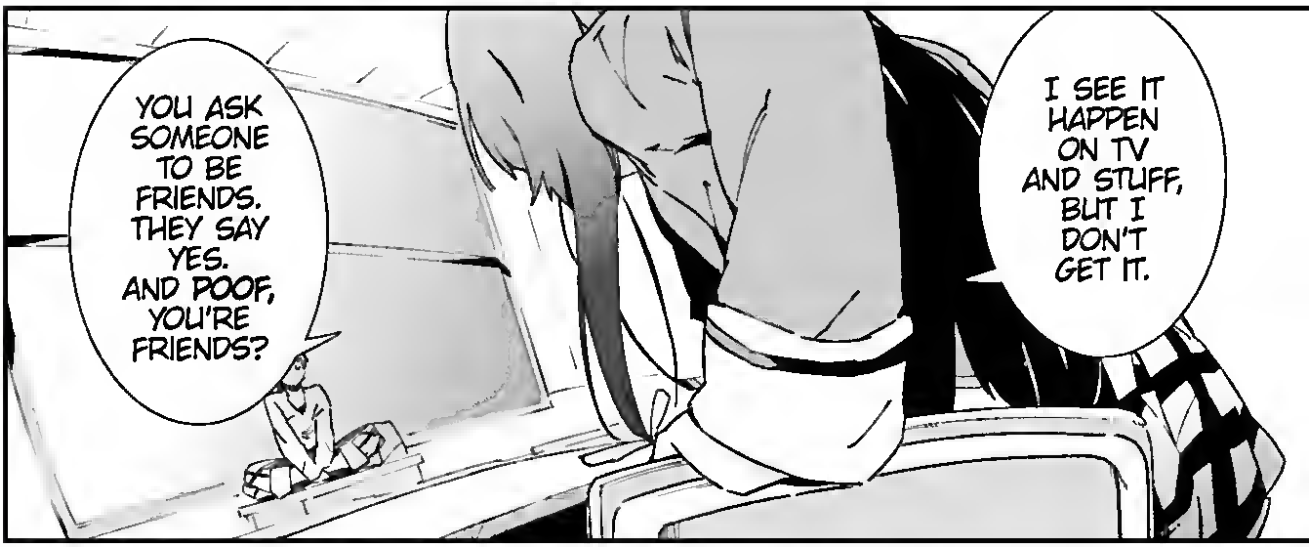

DID YOU HAVE ANY FRIENDS AT YOUR OLD SCHOOL, KODAKA?
SURE I DID.


SO IT WAS PERFECTLY NATURAL...
THAT I STARTED HANGING OUT WITH HIS GROUP.
YEAH, I DID.
I SAT BESIDE A FUNNY, POPULAR GUY IN CLASS.

SMIRK
YOU DID, DID YOU?
HEY!

ARE YOU TWO STILL IN TOUCH NOW?
.....
DON'T LOOK AT ME THAT WAY...!
OH! I KNOW!
BAP
TA-DA!
WHAT IF WE PAID PEOPLE TO BE OUR FRIENDS?
DO YOU HEAR HOW PATHETIC THAT SOUNDS ?!
YOU COULD PAY THEM 1000 YEN A WEEK TO HANG OUT AT SCHOOL, OR BUY THEM LUNCH...
SO LIKE AN ESCORT SERVICE, BUT FOR FRIENDS!
OH, WELL PUT! YOU'RE A RIOT.
YES, IT WOULD BE A SERVICE.
.....

HERE'S A THOUGHT: WHY NOT MAKE FRIENDS LIKE NORMAL PEOPLE DO?
TMP


I SEE IT HAPPEN ON TV AND STUFF, BUT I DON'T GET IT.
YOU ASK SOMEONE TO BE FRIENDS. THEY SAY YES. AND POOF, YOU'RE FRIENDS?

BUT WHAT IF YOU NEVER SPEAK TO EACH OTHER AGAIN AFTER THAT?
ARE YOU STILL "FRIENDS" AT THAT POINT? IS THAT HOW IT IS?

WELL... I HAVE TO ADMIT THAT SOUNDS *FISHY* TO ME, TOO.

I DON'T PARTICULARLY MIND BEING ALONE.
WHAT I MIND IS PEOPLE GIVING ME THAT "OH, YOU POOR, FRIENDLESS THING" LOOK.
HUH?!
ANYWAY, I'M NOT PINING AWAY FOR A FRIEND OR ANYTHING.
BUT THE FLIP SIDE IS THAT PEOPLE ASSUME NOT HAVING FRIENDS IS BAD.
YEAH, THAT MAKES SENSE. PEOPLE ASSUME IT'S BETTER TO HAVE FRIENDS.
AND FUNDAMENTALLY, I AGREE.
BUT...
SO HAVING A FRIENDSHIP FOR SHOW AT SCHOOL IS FINE TOO.
I'M FINE ON MY OWN.
AND I DON'T THINK THAT'S QUITE RIGHT.

.....
WELL, SURE.
BUT ME, I'D LIKE TO HAVE SOME REAL FRIENDS.
HMM...

SO, DO YOU HAVE A PLAN IN MIND, KODAKA?
SOME QUICK AND EASY WAY TO FIND THEM?
HUH? ME?
UHHHH...
THERE'S ALWAYS JOINING A CLUB, RIGHT?
A CLUB?
THAT GUARANTEES YOU HAVE THINGS IN COMMON WITH THE OTHER MEMBERS!
AND IT MEANS YOU SPEND TIME GETTING TO KNOW EACH OTHER!

VETOED.
HOW COME?!
TOO EMBARRASSING.
CLATTER
STAND
...?!
GOOD POINT.
SEE?
THINK ABOUT IT. IT'S JUNE OF OUR JUNIOR YEAR.
BY NOW, PEOPLE IN CLUBS HAVE FORMED RELATIONSHIPS. JOINING NOW WOULD BE HUMILIATING.
AND IF SOMEONE ONLY JOINS SO THEY CAN MAKE FRIENDS...
WHO'D WELCOME SOMEONE LIKE THAT?
THAT'LL THROW THE WHOLE CLUB'S BALANCE OFF.
UHH...

SHE'S RIGHT. I'D BE JOINING UNDER FALSE PRETENSES, WITH NO REAL ABILITY. AND I BET I'D SCREW OTHER PEOPLE'S FRIENDSHIPS UP SOMEHOW.
BUT STILL... A CLUB...
HMM...
A CLUB, HUH?
STARE
!!!
THAT'S IT! A CLUB!!
BONG

A CLUB! A CLUUUB!
BLAM
TWIRL
TWITCH
WHO KNEW?
SHE'S PRETTY CUTE WHEN SHE SMILES.
THE NEXT DAY AFTER SCHOOL...
YOU'RE LATE!

UH... PAPER-WORK?
I'VE FINISHED ALL THE PRELIMI-NARY PAPER-WORK.
YEP!
IF JOINING AN EXISTING CLUB WON'T WORK, MAKING OUR OWN IS THE OBVIOUS MOVE.

WAIT. DID YOU SAY YOU FINISHED THE PAPER-WORK?
I DID, AND I DID.
SO YOU JUST CREATED A NEW CLUB...?
TO MAKE FRIENDS? I GUESS STARTING A NEW CLUB DOES MEAN STARTING RELATIONSHIPS FROM SCRATCH--
UH HUH. IT'S CALLED THE NEIGHBORS CLUB.

THE "NEIGHBORS CLUB"...?
NOD
"IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTIANITY, WE SHALL EXTEND OUR HANDS IN FRIENDSHIP AND GOODWILL TO OUR SCHOOLMATES.
"WE SHALL LOVE OUR NEIGHBORS AS OURSELVES, SUPPORTING EACH OTHER ON THE ROAD OF LIFE."
THAT SOUNDS... SUSPICIOUS.
AND THE SCHOOL WENT FOR THAT?
FOR BETTER OR WORSE, THIS PLACE IS PRETTY LAID-BACK.
IF YOU START WITH SOMETHING LIKE "THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTIANITY" AND GO FROM THERE, THEY'LL SWALLOW ALMOST ANYTHING.
RELIGIOUS STUFF, YOU KNOW? NOTHING TO IT.
IF SHE HAS THAT KIND OF ENERGY, SHE SHOULD'VE JUST JOINED A CLUB LIKE EVERYONE ELSE.

AND WHAT EXACTLY DOES THE CLUB DO?
OKAY, IT'S THE NEIGH-BORS CLUB.

STUFF THAT RESULTS IN HAVING FRIENDS, OBVI-OUSLY.

OH, OF COURSE. I SHOULD'VE KNOWN.
IT MEANS WE WON'T HAVE TO FACE THOSE "YOU POOR, FRIENDLESS THING" LOOKS ANYMORE.
GLEAM
WE COULD EVEN LOOK FOR "REAL" FRIENDS, LIKE YOU SAID BEFORE.

WHA?!
WELL, THAT SOUNDS GREAT. HOPE IT WORKS OUT.
DON'T TALK LIKE YOU'RE NOT INVOLVED! YOU'RE A CHARTER MEMBER!
SINCE YOU HURRIED HOME YESTERDAY, I FILLED OUT YOUR APPLICATION.
YOU SHOULD BE THANKING ME.
WHY WOULD YOU DO THAT?!
IT'S OUR NEW CLUB'S FIRST DAY, FELLOW MEMBER!

YEAH, SHE REALLY IS CUTE WHEN SHE SMILES.
AND THAT'S HOW I, HASEGAWA KODAKA...
YOU--!
STOP ZONING OUT. LET'S GO.
BUT ONLY WHEN SHE SMILES...!!
JOINED THE EVEN WEIRDER NEIGHBORS CLUB.
Neighbors Club
Mission Statement:
YOU'RE NOT LISTENING AT ALL!!!
AND MIKAZUKI YOZORA, A WEIRD CLASS-MATE...